

AIMS AND OBJECTS OF THE EUGENICS SOCIETY*

Eugenics aims at improving the inborn qualities of future generations.

Ethical and Scientific Bases

THE *ethical* basis of eugenics consists in duties not only to our neighbours but also to posterity. These duties include the provision, not only of the best possible environmental conditions, but also the best physical and mental endowment.

The *scientific* basis of eugenics must be one of sound biological knowledge. Racial changes have hitherto occurred without conscious human direction. Eugenics seeks to find the means by which the blind forces of Nature may be controlled by a consciously directed policy based on scientific study of transmissible biological factors.

Among animals and primitive peoples, racial changes occur through natural selection, i.e. by unrestricted reproduction of all types, causing a struggle for existence in which the less capable are eliminated by early death. Modern civilized man revolts against submission to this crude process and usually resorts to the restriction of families. This may involve the preservation and increase of weak types—a racial deterioration which improvements in the environment alone are powerless to check. Rational eugenic selection aims at diminishing the fertility of all persons below the average in valuable heritable qualities and at maintaining a sufficient reproduction of those above the average to ensure that their contribution to the next generation should become progressively larger.

Eugenics : A Study and a Practice

The term “Eugenics” implies both a scientific study and a social practice. By further study, an attempt should be made to give precision to our knowledge of the part

played by heredity in regard to physical and mental superiority, to human defects and diseases and to human inefficiency in any form of society. In particular an attempt should be made to elucidate the respective influences of heredity and environment upon the human type, and to define more clearly such terms as good and bad stock, and superior, average and inferior endowment.

But as well as being a study, eugenics is a social practice. In practice it seeks to realize the aims of (A) *positive* and (B) *negative eugenics* respectively by :

- (A) promoting the fertility of superior, healthy and useful stocks ; and by
- (B) restricting through voluntary measures the multiplication of those who suffer from hereditary infirmities.

An indispensable preliminary to the application of either of these principles is to create throughout the community a “eugenic conscience.” This is to be attained not only by the education of the young in the principles of biology, but also by spreading among all an appreciation of the effects of their actions upon future generations. Except in regard to the segregation of lunatics, mental defectives and certain criminals, the *Society* does not advocate the compulsory application of the principles of negative eugenics. It seeks to awaken a eugenic or racial conscience which will influence :

- (1) The individual in the choice of a mate and in the decisions as to parenthood, and
- (2) the community so as to bring to bear on issues of eugenic importance the forces of scientifically informed public opinion.

THE STUDY OF EUGENICS

The *Society* encourages the study of all aspects of human heredity and differential fertility. It considers that the following

* This statement of policy may be obtained in pamphlet form on application to the Secretary, Eugenics Society, 69 Eccleston Square, London, S.W.1.

subjects are specially in need of further investigation :

Population Problems

Further knowledge is needed (a) concerning the relative rates of multiplication of the different sections of the population, (b) as to whether a definite relation exists between the inherited qualities of different sections of the community and their social and economic status, and (c) as to the eugenic or dysgenic tendencies of different types of social structure.

Human Abilities and Disabilities

The *Society* favours the study of the inheritance of good health and physique and of special abilities and aptitudes of social value to the community. It is also anxious to promote the organized study of hereditary deficiencies, diseases and defects, with a view of ascertaining their prevalence and distribution, and of rendering more accurate our forecasts of their incidence in affected families. The co-operation of the medical profession in this task is essential.

The " Social Problem Group "

This term was employed by the Mental Deficiency (Wood) Committee, 1930, to denote a group of people who are asserted to exhibit " social problem " characteristics such as insanity, mental defect, epilepsy, occupational instability, recidivism, inebriety and social dependency. The *Society* seeks to determine if such a group can be distinguished and defined, and if any of its characteristics are of a hereditary nature.

Human Evaluation and Registration

The *Society* desires to see changes made in the methods of keeping the relevant statistical records so that data may be available for eugenic study. This principle should apply to the registration of births and marriages and to records of medical inspection of school children, so as to make possible the detection of changes in the physical condition of the population.

Family Records

Galton stated that every intelligent person should study his family pedigree. The

Society has prepared a schedule to facilitate such study and looks forward to the establishment of facilities for the preservation and study of pedigrees.

Research into Contraceptive Methods

The *Society* favours the promotion of clinical, statistical and laboratory research with a view to ascertaining the reliability, the practicability and the effects on health (both of parents and children) of existing contraceptive methods; it also encourages research with a view to the discovery of methods sound in these respects.

Family Allowances

The *Society* favours the study of the eugenic value or danger of different forms of Family Allowances.

Race Mixture

In certain circumstances, race mixture is known to be bad. Further knowledge of its biological effects is needed in order to make it possible to frame a practical eugenic policy. Meanwhile, since the process of race mixture cannot be reversed, great caution is advocated.

Immigration

In view of the possible effects on the national stock of admitting persons of varying quality, the biological aspects of the regulations governing immigration, and the plans for emigration within the Empire should be regarded as a matter of urgent study.

THE PRACTICE OF EUGENICS

As above stated, this can be divided into negative and positive aspects.

NEGATIVE EUGENICS

The following measures have, at various times, been suggested as likely to diminish the fertility of sub-average persons: birth control, sterilization, segregation, legal prohibition of marriage and artificial termination of pregnancy.

Birth Control

Instruction on methods of birth control, under medical supervision, should be provided by local authorities. Such instruction

should stress both its value and danger from a eugenic point of view, and should not be restricted to women suffering from gynæcological illnesses.

Sterilization

The *Society* advocates that facilities for voluntary sterilization be provided, under appropriate safeguards, for persons suffering from or carrying transmissible defects seriously impairing physical or mental efficiency.

It considers that without introducing compulsion, valuable results can be achieved by awakening throughout the community an enlightened eugenic conscience.

Segregation

In cases of mental defect and mental disorder, the *Society* does not regard sterilization as an alternative to segregation but as an accessory or ancillary procedure. The *Society* concurs with the recommendations of the Wood Committee that facilities should be extended and perfected for segregating and "socializing" mental defectives. Voluntary sterilization would, from the eugenic standpoint, be a necessary adjunct to this policy.

Legal Prohibition of Marriage

It has been proposed that the marriage of mental defectives should be prohibited by law. So far as this is intended as a eugenic measure it is ineffective and undesirable, as it does not prevent, and may even incite, propagation by promiscuous unions with their dysgenic possibilities and other evils. Its aims can be realized more effectively and humanely by providing defectives desiring to marry with facilities for obtaining their own sterilization and by encouraging marriage when this safeguard has been adopted.

Termination of Pregnancy

The *Society* advocates the provision of legalized facilities for voluntarily terminating pregnancy in cases of persons for whom

sterilization is regarded as appropriate, and in cases of incest and rape.

POSITIVE EUGENICS

The *Society* holds that married couples of sound stock who deliberately have fewer children than they can adequately bring up, do an injury to the race. It opposes restrictions on marriage which now discriminate against sound stocks.

The following measures are suggested in order to promote the fertility of such people.

Family Allowances

The *Society* favours the provision of family allowances by the establishment of graded equalization pools and other systems calculated to have a eugenic effect. It regards as wholly dysgenic the provision of allowances through flat rate payments by the State.

Taxation

In order to ease the burden of taxation where the expenses of bringing up children are very heavy in relation to the income, the present system of income tax allowance should be amended, extended and rendered more effective.

Education

The *Society* favours for children of superior ability the extensive provision of scholarships sufficient to ease financial burdens, and thereby promote the further reproduction of the parents.

Birth Control

The *Society* holds that, since the practice of birth control in the last seventy years has acted dysgenically rather than eugenically, birth control should be practised by persons of superior biological endowment only with a view to spacing births.

Marriage Certificates

The *Society* favours the exchange before marriage of certificates providing information of eugenic significance.

